

A SKETCH OF THE LIFE

—OF—

MAJOR EZRA BEAMAN.


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A SKETCH
OF
THE LIFE OF
MAJOR EZRA BEAMAN,
TOGETHER WITH
DOCUMENTS OF PUBLIC INTEREST.


BY ALBERT A. LOVELL.



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SKETCH OF EZRA BEAMAN.

SEVENTY years have passed since the death of one who acted a prominent part in the history of three towns in central Massachusetts, and to this time an account of his life and services has remained unwritten. This may be accounted for in part by the fact that his history is embodied in that of separate towns and does not belong exclusively to either.

If it were necessary that the events of his life should have a "local habitation," it might well be given to the parent town of Shrewsbury, although Boylston and West Boylston may equally well claim the honor. It seems proper that the life of this man should be presented with whatever pertains to the history of Shrewsbury, for, although his abode through nearly his whole life was in one locality, he lived in three separate townships, the division and re-division of the territory which originally fell to the lot of Shrewsbury rendering such the case. Shrewsbury, staunch and true to every cause which tends to the advancement of religion, liberty and law, is and always has been a representative New England community, solid and substantial as the hills on which she rests. While she holds in grateful remembrance the name of Ward, the first commander of our infant army in the war of the Revolution; of Sumner, the beloved pastor who led his flock by the still waters of happiness and peace; of Cushing, the military leader in the struggle for freedom; she is not unmindful of the services of Ezra Beaman, the patriot and the man of enterprising public spirit, ever ready to defend the colonies from the encroachments of arbitrary power, and to do whatever tended to the advancement of the material prosperity of the community in which he lived. These pages will present some facts concerning Major Beaman, who was an active and leading man in the immediate vicinity where he resided, and who sustained and exercised an extensive and controlling influence in

the community at large. It is in the lives of the leading spirits of these early days that we must look to find the spring that watered and nourished feeble settlements until they had struck their roots into deeper soil, and had attained such a growth, and were so firmly established in the principles of self-government that the summer heat of political agitation, and the winter blast of infidelity, communism and private ambition pass harmlessly by and leave no trace behind.

This sketch does not pretend to present a full and complete survey of the life and services of Ezra Beaman, but passes them in hasty review, and is in some degree documentary.

Ezra Beaman was born in Bolton, Mass., October 16, 1736. He was the son of Jabez Beaman, who having purchased a large tract of land in the westerly part of the town of Shrewsbury, favorably situated on both sides of the Nashua River, including some of the most fertile in that region, removed thence with his family in 1746. Jabez Beaman dying in 1757, the homestead came under the proprietorship of Ezra the eldest son where he resided until his death. In 1758 he married Persis, daughter of Cyprian Keyes, with whom he lived thirty years. She died November 7th, 1788, at the age of 50 years. By this marriage he had six children. He afterwards married Mary, daughter of Richard Boylston of Charlestown, who survived him.

It was a characteristic of Major Beaman that he was constituted with an active and vigorous mind, combined with wonderful energy, decision, firmness and perseverance. Thus constituted he was constantly engaged in projects both of a public and private nature which accrued to his own emolument and to great and essential advantage to the whole community. His judgment was almost unerring, and his designs generally resulted in accordance with his expectations and desires. Such was the confidence reposed in him, and in such high estimation was he held by the people not only of his own town but of a large surrounding section, that whenever any project of a public nature bearing upon the well being of the people at large was to be considered, he was at once consulted and generally in accordance with his expressed opinion either for or against, was the scheme adopted or rejected.

In 1764 he erected a dwelling house on the tract purchased by his father which he occupied until his death, and which his son bearing the same name continued to occupy for half a century later.

This house in the thoroughness of its construction, its size and its architectural proportions, was probably unsurpassed by anything of its kind in the county. This was known as the Beaman Tavern, and for a century was a typical Way-side Inn; and from it went out an influence which was felt not only in its immediate vicinity but throughout a large extent of country.

The tavern of one hundred years ago, and even up to the time when the railroad superceded the stage and the team as a means of transportation for passengers and merchandise, especially when its proprietor was a person of prominence and force, was a power in the community. During the days of the Revolution the tavern was the resort of tories or patriots according to the political proclivities of the landlord, and here were schemes devised, either for or against the patriot cause according to the political character which it assumed. It was at the tavern where the people most frequently assembled either in a formal or informal manner to discuss, debate, devise and carry forward such plans and projects as from time to time occupied the attention of the people. Its good cheer no doubt lent its aid, and who can tell what inspiration it imparted? The influence of the Beaman Tavern was decidedly in favor of the patriot cause and a favorite stopping place for soldiers on their way to and from the army, there to impart or receive the latest information in regard to events so rapidly transpiring.

Major Beaman was a true and ardent patriot. When the first encroachments of arbitrary power were beginning to be felt he was convinced that nothing short of forcible resistance would be of any avail, and during the struggle he was an active and unflinching spirit in behalf of the liberties of the people. He was with the army near Boston in 1775, and during the whole war was actively engaged in whatever tended to the advancement of the cause. His time, his influence, his property, were devoted to the cause of colonial independence, making the pledge his own, of life, property and sacred honor.

The people of Shrewsbury manifested their confidence in him by repeatedly electing him a member of the board of selectmen. He was thus chosen in 1766-69-70-71-72-73-76-79-84-85. We of this day can hardly realize the importance of the office of selectman of a town for the years immediately preceding and during the Revolution. The position seems to have implied but little, but in reality it implied much. In towns true to the patriot cause it implied a lofty patriotism and an unyielding firmness, and was an office of the utmost importance and responsibility. Not only were the selectmen called upon to take care of the ordinary interests of the town, but much additional labor was required. The procuring of soldiers to fill requisitions for men, the raising of money and supplies of provisions and clothing for the army, the care of the families of soldiers besides the carrying on of the war to a great extent on the part of the town. As was often the case the Committees of Safety and Correspondence were made up wholly or in part from their number. In accordance with recommendations of the Provincial Congress, the town exercised largely legislative, executive and judicial functions; its votes were laws, its judgment as to whether a man was a patriot or a tory was final, and from the verdict of hostility there was no appeal; and the selectmen and committees executed their decrees with spirit and firmness. By direction of the town they entered tories' houses, disarmed them, confined them to limits or in jail as the case might require. Thus the office was no sinecure, but on the contrary one of great labor, and probably at no time in the history of the colonies or the states, has such care been exercised in the choice of town officers as during this period of toil and strife. It is difficult at this day to realize the amount of labor and responsibility which devolved upon them.

Major Beaman, aside from his services in the army, acted a prominent part in the revolutionary proceedings of the town. As selectman, member of the committee of inspection, committee of correspondence and safety, as a prosecutor of persons inimically disposed towards the cause of the colonies, as one chosen to procure men and supplies for the continental army, he was zealous and indefatigable.

In 1781 the people of the North Parish desiring to obtain an act of incorporation as a town, took steps in that direction. In the warrant for a town meeting to be held in May of that year, the 5th article was as follows: "To hear the petition of Ezra Beaman and others praying to be set off a separate town." Some opposition manifesting itself, it was not until 1786 that an act of incorporation was obtained. Of the new town which was named Boylston, Ezra Beaman was chosen chairman of the board of selectmen, which office he held during the years 1786-88-89-90- 91-92, and was a member of the board during the years 1803-4-5. He was also representative from this town to the Great and General Court in 1789-1791, and town treasurer 1791-92-93-94. In 1794 a controversy arose in relation to the location of a new meeting house about to be erected. Major Beaman whose residence was some three miles west from Boylston centre, was desirous that the new house be erected half a mile northwest of the old one. After a protracted struggle the majority decided to build upon the old site. Major Beaman, with others seceded, and he at his own expense built a meeting house about three miles to the westward, and this difficulty in relation to the meeting house culminated after much opposition in the incorporation of the town of West Boylston in 1808.

Of the new town he was chosen chairman of the board of selectmen, town treasurer and representative to the General Court each year until his death in 1811. Benjamin F. Keyes in a very brief history of West Boylston published in 1858 says: "Although it may in truth be said that West Boylston eventually became a town almost wholly in consequence of his great exertions and untiring efforts, and that he laid the foundation for its future growth and prosperity, and although he did more to promote the general interest thereof than all others associated with him, yet very little if anything of adequate importance has been done (aside from a common tomb-stone erected at his grave) either by individual citizens or the town, as a testimony of his extensive influence, usefulness and great worth as a citizen and public benefactor, or for the perpetuation of his memory as one of the most distinguished and influential of the town and community in which he resided.

A few years ago however the town desiring to do honor to his memory as its principal founder, voted by a large majority to petition the legislature for a change of name to that of Beaman. Some opposition appearing, and the then representative of the family, a son of him for whom it was to be named, objecting, the petition was never presented.

Ezra Beaman's death occurred June 4, 1811, and his remains were buried in the plot of ground appropriated by his father previous to his death as a family burying ground, and in which several generations of the family now lie. This ground is on a ridge of land half a mile from the old Beaman Mansion, near the public road leading to Boylston. It overlooks a beautiful scenery of intervale bordering on the Nashua river and is enclosed by a remarkably solid and substantial stone wall with an iron gateway. At his funeral people came from far and near to pay respect to his memory. A lady still living who was present on that occasion, seventy years ago, informed me that although the place of burial was half a mile from the house, the head of the procession had arrived back to its starting point before the rear had left it.

The inscription on the stone which marks his grave is as follows :

ERECTED
IN MEMORY OF
EZRA BEAMAN Esq^R
WHO DIED
June 4 1811
Aged 74 years 7 months
19 days.

Friends & Physicians could not save
My mortal body from the grave
Nor can the grave confine me here
When Christ shall call me to appear.

Major Beaman was rather short in stature, quick and energetic in motion. He took much pride in beautifying the roadside of the town by planting along the highway adjoining his vast estate, trees of various kinds with a view to beauty and shade. There is a large buttonwood tree standing by the roadside near the old location of the ancient Beaman house bearing the marks

of age, which was planted by him in 1749, he being then thirteen years of age. His life was devoted to whatever tended to the advancement of the interests of the community, and his death was sincerely mourned. He was a member of the Congregational Church and was a liberal contributor to the cause of religion.

I have deemed it best to present copies of a few records and documents pertaining to Ezra Beaman which convey information relative to public matters. It is much to be regretted that the papers that belonged to him and which undoubtedly contained much of a public and personal nature have been so widely scattered or destroyed. Upon his death, these came into the custody of his son who succeeded him in the possession of the homestead, who preserved them with the most religious care, as he ever did everything that pertained to his father, and although he lived to the age of 94 years he always spoke of him with the most tender and filial respect. At his death in 1863, he never having married, the personal effects were scattered far and wide, through a general desire to obtain some memento of the distinguished person to whom they once belonged. Thus they have been destroyed or rendered inaccessible. But these which follow I have brought together,

“Ere yet Decay’s destroying fingers
Have swept the lines where merit lingers.”

In September, 1774 the town of Shrewsbury voted to have two companies of militia or training soldiers in the South Parish; the second or North Parish had already taken action in this direction and chosen Ezra Beaman captain.

December 27th, 1774, the town of Shrewsbury voted unanimously to adopt the Association of the Continental Congress, and in addition thereto, of the Provincial Congress of the 5th of December, relative to the non-importation and non-consumption of British goods; and in order to see the same carried into vigorous execution, chose a Committee of Inspection. This committee consisted of fifteen members of which Ezra Beaman was one.

On the arrival of the news of the Battle of Lexington a company of men marched from this town with Job Cushing as Captain, Ezra Beaman 1st Lieut. and Asa Rice 2d Lieut. Upon the organization of the army a majority remained. This company was assigned to the regiment of Col. Ward and took an active part in the seige of Boston.

Herewith is a copy of the Commission of Lieutenant Beaman.

*The Congress of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay
To Ezra Beaman, Gentleman,*

Greeting.—We, reposing especial Trust and Confidence in your Courage and good Conduct, Do, by the Presents, Constitute and appoint you the said Ezra Beaman to be a Lieutenant in the Company Commanded by Cap^t Job Cushing in the Regiment of Foot whereof y^e hon^{ble} Artemas Ward Esq. is Colonel raised by the Congress aforesaid for the Defence of said Colony.

You are therefore, carefully and diligently to discharge the Duty of a Lieutenant in leading, ordering, and exercising the said Company in Arms both inferior Officers and Soldiers, and to keep them in good Order and Dicipline; and they are hereby commanded to obey you as their Lieutenant, and you are yourself to observe and follow such orders and Instructions as you shall from Time to Time receive from the General and Commander in Chief of the Forces raised in the Colony aforesaid, for the Defence of the same, or any other your superior officers, according to military Rules and Discipline in War in Pursuance of the Trust reposed in you.

Dated the 29th of May

A. D. 1775

SAM'L FREEMAN Secretary P. T.

By order of the Congress

JOS. WARREN

President P. T.

Lieutenant Beaman was present and took part in the action on Bunker hill, and the part performed by the regiment of Col. Ward on that day is worthy of mention. When General Ward had learned that a reinforcement of British troops had been sent over to Charlestown, thereby reducing the disposable force of the enemy so that an attack upon headquarters at Cambridge was improbable, he ordered the regiment of Col. Jonathan Ward to march immediately to Charlestown. They had proceeded to within a little over a mile of the scene of action, when they

were met by a horseman, said to have been Dr. Benjamin Church, one of the Committee of Safety, who afterwards proved a traitor, coming from Charlestown, who asked Ward if he had not received counter orders? "No," was the answer. "You soon will," said Church, "Halt here." Part of the regiment remained here, the other part found means to advance, and took part in the engagement. That part of the regiment which had halted, after remaining on the ground an hour or more advanced, but soon met the other part of the regiment returning under a cannonade from the British. The regiment returned to Cambridge the next morning. Lieut. Beaman was among those who advanced and took part in the engagement.

The whereabouts of Lieut. Beaman during the summer and fall can be gathered from the following orders and passes:

Head Quarters Cambridge June 3 1775

Gen. Orders

That Lieut. Beaman proceed immediately to Shrewsbury & apprehend & bring back Daniel Holden, Asa Smith & William Rusforth who have deserted & bring them back to Camp, who are to be dealt with according to the Nature of their Crime, & the Horse that was taken from one of the Islands (if either of the above Persons carried away any such Horse) is to be brot back. The Selectmen are desired to afford all the assistance Lieut. Beaman may stand in need of.

S. OSGOOD Maj^r of Brigade

Permit Lieut Beaman to pass the Guards from Headquarters
Camp at Cambridge June 9th. J. WARD Secretary

Lieut. Ezra Beaman has leave to pass the Guard to and from
the Camp in Dorchester
July 28th 1775 J. WARD Colonel

Camp at Roxbury 8th Sept. 1775

Lieut. Beaman in Gen. Ward' Reg^t has a Furlough for six days.
By order of Gen^l Ward

J. WARD A. d. C.

The Powder Horn of Lieut Beaman now in possession of The Worcester Society of Antiquity is a beautiful and interesting relic. The inscription upon it is as follows: Lieut. Ezra Beaman, his horn, made at Fox Poynt so called, in Dorchester

September the 30 y^e 1775, in Thomas Gage's war who came to Boston y^e Americans for to enslave and take their rights away. Made by Micah Briard. The engraving on this horn is most beautifully done, and was the work of Micah Briard, a serjeant in Beaman's company.

In October Beaman sent the following letter to Colonel Ward :

DORCHESTER, OCTOBER 27th, 1775.

To Jonathan Ward Esq. Commander of a Regiment of Foot in the Continental Army at Dorchester.

S^r. Being required by Gen^l Orders to make return in this way of my Design whether to Continue in said Continental Army or not, and being first Lieutenant of a Company whereof M^r Job Cushing is Cap^t in your Honors Regiment & therefore of little Importance which is a Strong argument for my being excused, notwithstanding am willing but Desirous to use and exercise the utmost of Indeavor to preserve & Defend the Rights & Liberty's of my Country both Civil & Sacred, yet the many Inconveniences & almost Impossibilities that attend my Continuance in S^d Army urges in favor of my Dismission at the last of Decem^r next. Being assured that I can be ten fold more Servisable to the Army being in my usual Business than present with it.



Am S^r Your Hon^{rs} most Obd^t & Hum^l Serv^t.

EZRA BEAMAN.

His request for dismission was granted as the roll of the company reports him in the service eight months from April 19th, 1775. At the annual town meeting in Shrewsbury, in 1776, soon after his return, he was chosen one of its Committee of Correspondence, Safety and Inspection.

That he was actively engaged in preparing and forwarding men to the Continental Army is shown by the following orders.

To Samuel Andrews, Corporal

 L.S.  You are Required forthwith According to the Trust Re-
posed in me by Direction of the Commander of the Col-
ony of the Massachusetts Bay, to Notifie & warn all the Soldiers
under my Command Living upon the southward side of the Riv-
er above the Scar Bridge So called and thence to the meeting
house all to the Road leading to Worcester, But Not on S^d Road,
to Appear at the Meeting house in the Second Parish in Shrews-
bury on Wednesday the 5th Day of June 1776 at two of the

Clock in the After Noon with their Arms Compleat for exercise, their to Attend further orders from myself or some one of their officers; hearof fail not & make Return of this warrant with your Doings thereon to myself or in my Absence to Lieut. Fawcett at or Before the Hour mentioned.

given under my Hand and Seal this 28 Day of May.

Anno. do. 1776

EZRA BEAMAN Capt.

To Capt. Ezra Beaman or the Chief officer Present of said Company, Shrewsbury.

You are Required forthwith to Inlist into the Colony Service or Draft every 25th man in the Company under your Command Both of the training Band and of the Alarm List and see that they Are aquipt With Arms and ammunition according to Law and Ready to march at the Shortest Notice to Dorchester Heights, according to Resolve of Council of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay at Watertown July 18th and order also of Brigadier Warner to me Directed July 22 and make a Return of their Names so Inlisted or Drafted to me July 27 or on Monday morning July 29th.

Given under my hand at Grafton this 24th Day of July 1776.

JOHN GOULDING Col.


To Capt. Ezra Beaman, Shrewsbury, the Chief officer of said Company, these presents (are) according (to) orders from Brigadier (Gen W) arner to me directed.

You are hereby required forthwith to Cause to be mustered the Company under your Command and Draft every fifth man according to a resolve of the Grait & General Court of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay which I send here enclosed and make a return to me by Tuesday night or Wednesday morning Next.

Grafton September y^e 15 1776.

JOHN GOULDING Col.

To Samuel Andrews, Corporal

 *Greeting*—You are Required forthwith According to the Trust Reposed In me By Direction of the Council of the Colony of the Massachusetts Bay to Notifie & warn all the Soldiers under my command Belonging to the training Band & also the Alarm List to meet at the meeting house In the Second Par-
 ish in Shrewsbury on Tuesday the 17 Day Sep^r 1776 at Eight of the Clock in the morning with their Arms Compleat on Pen-
 alty of Paying a fine of ten Pounds for Non-appearance.

hereof fail Not & make Return of this warrant with your Doings hearon to myself or in my Absence to the Next officir in Rank at or Before the Hour above mentioned.

given under my hand & Seal this fifteenth Day Sep^t 1776.

EZRA BEAMAN Capt.

N. B. the Division for you & David Andrews to Be the westerly Parts of the Parrish from the first Parrish to the Second Parrish By the Road that Leads to Sawyer's Mills.

Corporal Caleb Kendall



Greeting—You are Required forthwith to Notify & warn Both Training Band & the alarm men Belonging to my Company on the East side of the Road that Leads from the first Parrish in Shrewsbury to the Second, so Leading to Sawyers Mills, to meet at the meeting house in S^d Parrish on Wednesday the twelfth Day of this Instant February at one of the clock In the afternoon with their Arms Compleat, their to Attend further orders.

Hearof Fail not & make Return of this warrant with your Doings thereon at or Before the hour above mentioned.

given under my hand & Seal the fifth Day of February A. D. 1777

EZRA BEAMAN Capt.

On the 16th day of June, 1777, Ezra Beaman was commissioned Major in the Sixth Worcester regiment, commanded by Col. Job Cushing of Shrewsbury. This regiment was engaged in the movements of the northern army which culminated in the surrender of Gen. Burgoyne.

Previous to the battle of Bennington this regiment had passed through that place and pushed on towards Ticonderoga. Receiving orders to return and reinforce General Stark without delay, it arrived at Bennington on Sunday, the day after the battle, and performed guard duty over the British prisoners.

The following are from Shrewsbury Town Records :

“D^r Edward Flint & Cap^t Ezra Beaman were chosen on the 17 day of February 1777, delegates to a convention proposed to be held at the request of the town of Sutton at the house of Widow Stearns in Worcester on the 26 of Feb’y, to come into some measures for the repeal of an act passed in the Great & General Court last spring called an act for the more equal Representation of the several towns in this state.”

“Maj. Ezra Beaman was chosen unanimously to procure & lay before the court at a special session of the Peace, the evidence that may be had of the Inimical disposition Towards any of the united States, of any Inhabitant of said town who shall be charged by the freeholders & other Inhabitants thereof of being a person whose residence in this State is dangerous to the Public Peace or Safety.”

October 20 1777 “chosen a member of a committee to adjust the duty done by each individual in said Town in the war since the 19th day of April 1775.”

November 16 1778 “Granted to Major Beaman for the expense of 17 days in attending special court & collecting evidence in the prosecution of inimical persons in the year 1777—£11-10s-0d and for cash paid M^r Lincoln for assisting in the prosecution of these inimical persons.”

August 9th 1779 chosen a member of a “committee, the town having voted to adopt the measures proposed by the convention at Concord 14th July 1779 & to regulate prices, and to see the resolves referred to are strictly and duly executed.”

25th May 1780 chosen member of a “committee to frame amendments to the Bill of Rights.”

January 1 1781 “chosen to procure men for the Continental Army.”

February 8th 1781 “chosen one of a committee for hiring money for the payment of men for the Continental Army.”

March 20 1782 In a Tax of £65 for a Continental Man for the army for three years, in a class of forty eight names Ezra Beaman's proportion was £15-8s-5d-2q nearly one third of the whole tax. In another Tax of £72 his proportion was £17-2s 3d-1q.

The following petition to the Great and General Court is without date.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

To the Hon. the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled:

HUMBLY Shews Ezra Beaman of Shrewsbury in the County of Worcester and Commonwealth of Massachusetts aforesaid Esquire, That he was at great expense during the late war in detecting and prosecuting persons inimically disposed to the general interests of the country; That he was at great expense & trouble in detecting Jotham Bush of Shrewsbury guilty of

uttering large sums of counterfeit money ; procuring witnesses for attending on the Courts from time to time when the said Bush was recognized for the crime of uttering & passing counterfeit money in the Counties of Middlesex and Worcester ; That your Petitioner spent considerable sums of Money and much Time in detecting Solomon Houghton of Lancaster, suspected and charged with uttering and passing large sums of counterfeit money, and that he was recognized as an evidence against said Houghton on eleven different indictments from Term to Term, for more than three years and expended a large sum of money in sending into the Eastern Country after the said Houghton at the express request of the Attorney General and was obliged to advance considerable sums of money to support evidence at Court from time to time on the different Indictments against the said Houghton ; and that he was at great expense in sending to Boston to apprehend one David Bush who was suspected of having a large sum of Counterfeit Money with him, the attendance as a prosecutor of the said Bush a number of Courts, paying and supporting at his own expense divers witnesses against said Bush ; That he attended a number of Terms as a witness against one John Williams charged with high Crimes and Misdemeanors against the Government, and that for more than seven years your Petitioner was constantly recognized as a witness in the County of Worcester against persons dangerously inimical to the Community and charged with counterfeiting the common currency of the Country ; That he was instrumental in detecting divers persons suspected of the Crimes aforesaid, For which service he has never received any recompense, neither hath he ever been refunded the money expended by him in the business aforesaid ; That he has regularly with others made certificate of his travel and attendance in the cases of the Commonwealth against Houghton and John Bush and delivered the same to the Attorney General but without any kind of effect, Wherefore your petitioner humbly prays the Hon^{ble} Court that they would take such measures as they in their wisdom should judge proper in order that your Petitioner may have some reasonable Compensation for his great trouble, Time, expenses & disbursements and as in Duty bound shall ever pray.

The following has an interest as connected with the incorporation of the town of Boylston :

At a legal meeting holden at the Second Precinct in Shrewsbury on Monday the Ninth day of May A. D. 1785, the warrant for said meeting contained the following article viz : “2^{ndly} To hear the Petition of the Committee of the Second Precinct in S^d

Shrewsbury requesting the Town would choose a Joynt Committee from each Precinct to perambulate the line and renew the Bounds between the Precincts, as also to settle all other matters relating to a Separation of Parishes & to act anything relative thereto the the town may think proper." The town voted a committe consisting of six, three in each precinct, viz ; Col^o Job Cushing, Lt Jonas Temple, Capt. Jonah Howe, Captⁿ Joseph Bigelow, Maj^r Ezra Beaman and Maj^r Asa Rice who reported at a subsequent meeting that they had "run the bounds &c. ; that the one half of the town securities, Town Stock of Ammunition & Intrenching tools which are the Property of said Town shall belong to the first precinct, and the other half shall be the property of the second Precinct, being equally divided. The Weights & Measures to be the property of the first precinct." The poor are severally assigned. Voted to sett off.

The following receipts are interesting as showing the position of the town of Boylston in Shays' Rebellion, and as giving the names of persons who served in suppressing that insurrection.

Boylston May the 4 A D. 1787

Then Received of Ezra Beaman the wages that is due to us the Subscribers as they are made up in Capt. Robert Andrews' Muster Roll, for servisses Dun in surpressing the Late Rebellion

JOSEPH HERENY
EHIJAH PIKE
SILVANUS DINSMOOR.

Boylston May 10 A. D. 1787

Then Receivd of Ezra Beaman all the wages that is Due to us the Subscribers for Serveises while we ware in Capt. Jonah How's Company in Sirpressing the Late Rebellion in the westward Countyis

JAMES LONGLEY	SAMUEL WHITCOMB	ALMER GOODNUF
JOHN ANDERSON	STEPHEN BIGLO	DAVID RICE
JONAS GOODNUF	JASON GLAZIER	KING HOW
JOTHAM GOODNUF	ROBERT HUDSON	JOSHUA STILES
LEVI MOORE	AMARIAH SAWYER	JOHN WHEELER
JOHN HASTINGS JR	WILLIAM SAWYER	LEVI BIGLOW
SAMUEL HARTHAN	JOSEPH BIGELOW JR	JONATHAN BOND

Boylston May the 4th 1787

Then Received of Ezra Beaman the wages that is due to us the Subscribers as they are made up on Cap^t Hollowell Taylers Muster Roll for Servisses Dun in Surpressing the Late Rebellion in the westward Counties.

AMHERST MORSE
JONATHAN BOND JR
JOHN ANDREWS.

I find a quaint order to Ezra Beaman as Precinct Treasurer.

Shrewsbury Second Precinct January 3 1784

To Major Ezra Beaman Precinct Treasurer

You are directed to pay yourself Sixteen Pounds Six Shillings and a penny two farthings for Money spent in defending the Action brought by Jotham Bush against the collectors & Assessors of said precinct and Eleven Pounds fifteen shillings & two pence being money laid out in Repairing the Meeting House and this order shall discharge you so much

LEVI MOOR } Committee for
JONATHAN BOND } said Precinct.

The documents which follow have an interest as presenting a portion of the history of the incorporation of the town of West Boylston. In 1794 a petition was presented to the town of Boylston as follows :

*To the Inhabitants of the Town of Boylston, Gentlemen—
The petition of the Subscribers Humbly Sheweth*

That your Petitioners view the time as being near at hand when circumstances will admit of their enjoying Ecclesiastical privileges in a more conscientious, agreeable & in a Much more convenient & enlarged manner than they have hitherto done, & being sensible that Religion the basis of human happiness is a natural concomitant of these privileges, we think it our duty to request that you would fully consent to our being incorporated into a separate Town, District or Society, as you think most proper. We do not solicit this favor wholly with a view to promote our Interests, Emolument or convenience, but for the good of a respectable number of our Neighbors, the welfare of our own & their Children & succeeding generations. Your compliance or non compliance with our request we do not consider as desisive of the cause we have undertaken ; but we view it in your present power either to aid or oppose our pursuit of the object we aim at.

We now declare unto you Gentlemen, that we do not wish to obtain the Prayer of our Petition to you, or of a similar one to higher power, by any unlawful or unfair means ; but by contrary means. We are inflexibly determined to use our utmost efforts, Because we are persuaded that our request is not only reasonable but that there is a fair prospect of our being separated from you. That this is the case we think you will not deny. If so, will it not be consistent with your own & our Interest to grant us our request. We think it will.

Consider your Petitioners as separate from you, and you will still be a respectable society, more numerous, of greater ability than many other Towns in this State. Is a forced connection with us worth contending for. Again, we ask what injury can you sustain by parting with us. To this you may reply that your Ministers tax will be a little augmented. This will not we think afford you a sufficient plea to withstand or even induce you to engage in an uncertain contest. These things Gentlemen we request you would wisely consider & your Petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray.

EZRA BEAMAN
& 27 others.

This petition the town refused to grant and the following was sent to the Great and General Court :

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court Assembled.

HUMBLY shew the Subscribers your petitioners, agents for the second parish in Boylston Holden and Sterling in the County of Worcester that the Inhabitants of said Parish are desirous that the Territory belonging to said Parish may be constituted and incorporated into a District by some proper Name and vested with all the Powers and Privileges which by law appertain and belong to Districts.

Your petitioners believe that the Happiness and Comfort of the second Parish aforesaid will be promoted by an incorporation into a District, that their concerns will be managed with more facility, convenience & with less Difficulty than in their present situation, that no possible injury can accrue to the towns of Boylston, Holden & Sterling or any other place, by your granting their request. Confidently relying on the Justice & Wisdom of the Legislature they humbly hope that their petition will be granted and as in Duty bound will ever pray

Jan'y 1807

EZRA BEAMAN	} Agents for and in behalf of the Parish in Boylston Holden & Sterling.
JONATHAN PLYMPTON	
PAUL GOODALE	
WILLIAM FAIRBANK	

In House of Representatives

July 23, 1807 Received & Committed to Committe on Towns.

Sent up for Concurrence PEREZ MORTON Speaker.

In Senate Jan'y 23 1807, Read & Concurred

J. BACON President.

The Committee of both Houses appointed to consider the Applications for the Incorporation of Towns &c. on the Petition of Ezra Beaman and others report the following order which is submitted.

SALEM TOWNE Per order.

Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Ordered: That the Petitioners cause an attested Copy of their Petition with this order thereon, to be served on the respective Town Clerks of the Towns of Boylston, Holden & Sterling, Forty days at least before the first Tuesday of the first session of the next General Court, that all persons may then appear, and show cause (if any they have) why the prayer of said Petition should not be granted.

In Senate Jan'y 24th 1807

Read and passed. Sent down for Concurrence.

J. BACON President.

In House of Representatives Jan'y 26th 1807

Read & Concurred

PEREZ MORTON Speaker.

A copy of this petition was served upon the town clerk of Boylston by Silas Beaman. A copy was served upon the town clerks of Holden and Sterling by Robert B. Thomas.

This petition brought out the following remonstrance :

To the Honorable Senate & House of Representatives in General Court Assembled.

The Inhabitants of the town of Boylston in the County of Worcester being cited on the Petition of Ezra Beaman & others to shew cause why the second Precinct in the Town of Boylston, Sterling & Holden should not be Incorporated into a District: The Subscribers, agents for said Town duly authorized & appointed for that purpose Respectfully submit to your consideration their answer to the prayer of said petition.

An unfortunate division having arisen in said Town in the year 1794 relative to the location of a Meeting house, then about to be erected, a few disaffected individuals have from that period been indefatigable in their exertions to produce the dismemberment & eventually the total ruin of the Corporation. In pursuance of this object the leading Petitioner availing himself of the Power and Influence derived from an ample fortune, erected a Meeting house at his own Individual expense within the limits of the present precinct, publicly proclaiming his intention to bring a separation as the most direct and certain means of

destroying the Town. A petition was accordingly presented to the Legislature for the Incorporation of a new Town to be composed of certain sections of the towns of Boylston, Sterling & Holden; on this Petition the said towns were cited and their opposition having proved successful, the next effort was to obtain an Incorporation of the present Precinct. Not satisfied with the accomplishment of this purpose, a petition was soon after preferred for an enlargement of the precinct by lopping off another section of the said Town of Boylston. The Inhabitants were again cited and notwithstanding their strenuous opposition the object was effected.

Having thus gradually severed from the original Corporation by far the most valuable and fertile portion of the Territory & more than one quarter of the whole number of ratable polls, the remaining Inhabitants had flattered themselves that the enemy would "Cease from troubling" and that they should be permitted to enjoy in tranquility the privileges which had been left to them after this injurious encroachment.

It being discovered however that the Town would survive the shock and that something more remained to be done before the Antient Corporation would be completely subverted, a new Project is devised & an attempt is now made, (with a spirit of obstinate perseverance for which our leading opponent is particularly distinguished) to convert the Precinct into a district more effectually to Impair our privileges and to accomplish this systematic work of Destruction. Possessing advantages for an Increase of Population much superior to the first Precinct (from the better quality of their Land & other local causes) it is calculated with confidence by the Petitioners that the ratable polls within the intended district which are now nearly equal will soon exceed in number those within the Town of Boylston. By thus bringing to their aid a small portion of the Inhabitants of Sterling and Holden (who will compose a part of the district) it is intended by our enemies Inhabiting this disaffected section to deprive the Town of the important privilege of Representation. Such will be the Inevitable consequence of incorporating the petitioners into a district, Provided such district is attached to the Town of Boylston.

Such we know to be the object of their leaders because it has been openly avowed, and although the petition is silent on the subject of annexation they have publicly declared their intention to be annexed to the Town of Boylston.

With this impression, with an anxious desire to preserve our Corporate existence, to retain the privilege of representation and to defeat a project concerted for our complete disfranchisement as a member of the Commonwealth, We beg leave respect-

fully & earnestly to remonstrate against the prayer of said petition, *provided the District thus to be incorporated is to be annexed to the town of Boylston of which we are Inhabitants.*

At the same time we wish it to be explicitly understood that all opposition on our part is withdrawn if it be consented on the part of the petitioners or is found expedient by the Legislature to *annex the intended District to Sterling, Holden or any other Town in the County.* For although we have most sensibly felt the injury resulting to us from the partial dismemberment of this small but once united & flourishing Corporation, yet our peace has been so incessantly disturbed by new projects of encroachment, and we have encountered so much trouble and expense in opposing these projects that we are now fully persuaded we shall never be at rest; that our existence as a Corporation will be in perpetual jeopardy until this troublesome and offending member is totally severed from the body which it thus threatens to destroy.

For the fourth time the Town of Boylston is now cited before the Legislature to answer to the petition of Ezra Beaman and others. The object of each of these petitions has been most essentially to injure if not destroy us as a Corporation. Let Ezra Beaman & others become a Corporation totally detached from us, & whatever may be the evil we will Patiently submit. We trust with confidence in the wisdom of the Legislature to discern the object of the present petition, & we trust with equal confidence that they will be influenced by a desire of justice & a regard to the essential interests of a small but peaceable community, to refuse an act of incorporation annexing the proposed District to the Town of Boylston against the earnest wishes and settled opposition of every Individual who feels a solicitude to preserve our existence as a Corporation

Boylston May 26 1807

JAMES LONGLEY	} Agents for the town of Boylston.
ROBERT ANDREWS	
AARON WHITE	

A remonstrance against annexation signed by Jonas Temple and sixty-one others was also presented to the Legislature, the principal argument being that it would affect the privilege of representation. Sometime afterwards agents of the town of Boylston and of the precinct in Boylston Holden and Sterling, met and signed articles of agreement, Article 1st of which was as follows: "It is agreed that the Precinct shall be incorporated into a town."



